



PHOTOGRAPHY NEWS

■ CHAMPAGNE FOR SONY

August saw a flurry of announcements for new cameras, starting with Sony and the latest in its DSC-T range. The T5 has a non-protruding 3x zoom lens and 5-megapixel CCD as well as a 2.5" screen and 32MB of internal memory. The T5 will be available in red, champagne gold, silver and black. No prices were available as we went to press.



■ CASIO PROMISES LONG LIFE

Casio has announced four new cameras: the Exilim EX-Z500 (pictured) costs £280 and has a 5-megapixel sensor and 3x zoom lens. Its main claim to fame is a 500-shot battery life, which we hope to test in next month's *Shopper*. In addition, the EX-Z10 has a 5-megapixel CCD, while the EX-Z110 has six megapixels and the EX-Z120 7.2 megapixels.



All models feature the same 3x zoom lens and include Casio's DSP anti-shake technology. You can expect all four cameras to be available by October.

■ CANON LAUNCHES NINE

Canon has launched nine new digital cameras. Two of these, the EOS-1D Mark II N and EOS 5D, are professional-level digital SLRs and cost £3,049 and £2,539 respectively.

At the other end of the scale, the entry-level PowerShot A410 has a 3.2x zoom lens, records 3.2 megapixels and costs a mere £139. The 5-megapixel A610 and 7-megapixel A620 cost £279 and £319. The range-topping PowerShot S80 has a wide-angle 3.2x zoom lens, 8-megapixel sensor and a large range of manual controls and costs £499.

Canon's compact IXUS i Zoom (pictured) has a 2.4x zoom lens in front of its 5-megapixel sensor, and costs £319. The larger-bodied IXUS range also gets a revamp with the 5-megapixel IXUS 55 and 7-megapixel IXUS 750, which cost £329 and £419. All nine cameras will be in shops by the time you read this.



REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

OLYMPUS Camedia C-180

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £93 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.digital-cameras.com

DETAILS www.olympus.co.uk

A 2-megapixel sensor used to be considered adequate for an entry-level camera. At under £100, Olympus's Camedia C-180 certainly has an entry-level price, but with five megapixels behind its fixed lens, it records at a higher resolution than most. Its rounded plastic body feels solid and is comfortable to hold, although it doesn't take long for the silver finish to rub off and spoil the otherwise classy look.

A front-mounted slider turns the camera on and opens the sturdy lens cover. As there is no optical zoom, the lens doesn't protrude from the body. A zoom rocker on the back of the camera is of little practical use as it activates only the detail-reducing digital zoom. There's no viewfinder, so you have to rely on the cramped 1.5" screen to frame your shots.

A mode dial switches between auto and video mode, seven standard scene settings and Program, which is distinguished by the addition of exposure compensation. Macro, flash and timer settings are all adjusted using a direction pad, as is a camera reset function, which returns the C-180 to its default settings. Even if you're new to digital photography, you'll find the menu system clear and easy to use.

On the whole, the C-180 takes vivid, lively photos. The 2,592x1,944 resolution is high enough



for prints up to 8x6". Its 5-megapixel sensor and lens capture a good level of detail for such an inexpensive camera, although photos lack the detail of those from 5-megapixel cameras with more substantial lenses. A slow flash charge time makes shooting in low light frustrating, but the final photos tend to be well balanced and detailed.

It's unfair to compare the C-180 to other 5-megapixel cameras when most others cost significantly more. A more appropriate comparison is with similarly priced cameras, and here the C-180 does well. If you want an inexpensive camera that you can rely on to take good photos, the C-180 definitely fits the bill.

David McKinnon

✓ Lively photos; easy to use; inexpensive

✗ Small screen; slow flash

SPECIFICATIONS 2,592x1,944 resolution, fixed lens, 14MB internal memory, xD memory slot. **Part code** 155091

HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

CANON PowerShot S2 IS

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £328 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.7dayshop.com

DETAILS www.canon.com

Canon's PowerShot S2-IS might weigh just over half a kilo, but it's incredibly comfortable to use. Its bright 12x zoom lens is mechanically stabilised, which helps the 5-megapixel sensor produce sharp, blur-free pictures even when shooting at full zoom from your hand. It takes rich, warm stills, and records movies at 640x480 and 30fps. A stunning macro mode lets you focus on objects right up to the lens surface. If you want a camera that has a big zoom lens and plenty of shooting options, this is the one to buy.



SPECIFICATIONS 2,560x1,920 resolution, stabilised 12x zoom lens (36-432mm), 16MB SD card. **Part code** 9883A007AA



HOTLIST TRANSPARENCY SCANNER

EPSON Perfection 4180 Photo

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £146 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

If you want to get the best from your photos and slides when transferring them to your PC, you have to aim for maximum scanning resolution. The Perfection 4180 Photo scans at a maximum of 4,800x9,600dpi, so you can be sure you'll capture every last detail. It can scan up to six slides at once, so it shouldn't take too long to digitise your entire collection.



SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x9,600 optical resolution, 35mm, slide, 120-roll transparency adaptor, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** B11B70024





REVIEW PHOTO STUDIO

HP Photosmart 422

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £250 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.argos.co.ukDETAIL www.hp.co.uk

HP's Photosmart 422 portable photo studio comprises a Photosmart M415 digital camera and Photosmart 420 portable photo printer. This pairing is far from accidental, as the camera slots neatly into a cradle on the printer, which then uses the camera's screen for menu and preview functions. An optional battery is available for the printer for an extra £55.

The camera itself feels reassuringly solid, and the moulded grip and thick body make it comfortable to hold. All controls are intelligently

placed and well labelled, so even photography novices will find it easy to use. To make it simpler still, HP includes an on-camera help file to guide you through the camera's and printer's basics.

The M415 is essentially an entry-level camera and, as such, has few advanced controls. A mode button cycles through the usual array of preset scenes, macro and infinity focus modes, while exposure compensation is the only concession to more sophisticated techniques.

A sluggish 3x zoom lens feeds light to a 5-megapixel sensor. This is enough to produce prints up to 8x6". The M415's images are warm and rich but not as sharp as those from more accomplished cameras at medium and long range. Fine detail is often lost, and subtle textures appear bland and have a painted look.

Printing direct from the camera is a seamless process. When you place the M415 on the printer cradle, it switches to a preview mode. Simply select the photos you want to print, press the print button, and off it goes. You can recompose your photos by cropping to a section of a photo and printing just that. It's quick and convenient, and renders the computer unnecessary, although you lose the versatility you get by transferring the photos to the computer and printing from there. As well as the obvious image-editing benefits, using a computer as an intermediary means you can access the print driver and the full range of printer settings.

Like all compact HP photo printers, the 420 uses a three-ink cartridge. This has a maximum print resolution of 4,800x1,200, although you can only select the maximum print quality by using the printer driver on a PC. Printing a borderless 6x4" photo takes about two minutes and 10 seconds, and you can expect to get about 130 prints from a



high-capacity cartridge, but considerably fewer from the supplied starter cartridge.

Three-ink photo printers tend to have trouble reproducing the subtleties of a photo's colours, and the Photosmart 420 is no exception. Photos look fine from a distance with a clean, if rather vivid, colour balance. Up close, though, colour transitions look a little grainy. Light areas of photos suffer from speckling, and while HP's black ink performs well, producing deep shadow, it overpowers the others in dark areas so subtle tones are lost.

On output quality alone, the Photosmart 422 isn't quite up to scratch. Although the convenience of the integrated design is attractive, you can get a more proficient budget camera and better compact photo printer elsewhere for a similar amount.

David McKinnon



✓ An inexpensive and complete photo suite

✗ Neither camera or printer are the best in their fields

SPECIFICATIONS CAMERA: 2,620x1,984 maximum resolution, 16MB internal memory. **PRINTER:** three-colour inkjet, 6x4" paper, 4,800x1,200 maximum resolution, USB Hi-Speed. **Part code** (1P)Q6400B

HOTLIST SCANNER

MUSTEK Be@rpaw 4800TA Pro II

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £60 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.mustek.co.uk

It may have been around for a while, but this scanner still offers the entry-level buyer above-average transparency results. It's easy to operate, with a simplified control panel for those who find the TWAIN interface too much. Scan quality isn't perfect, it's not as fast as many other scanners and there are no Mac drivers, but it's a great value all-rounder.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,400x4,800 optical resolution, 35mm, slide transparency adaptor, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** 98-155-00010



HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

FUJIFILM FinePix F10

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £221 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.fujifilm.com

FujiFilm's metal-bodied FinePix F10 has a highly sensitive 6-megapixel sensor behind its 3x zoom lens. This makes it excellent for low-light photography. Its battery can run and run, lasting up to 500 shots between charges, and it's the most responsive camera we've tested. It also produces the sharpest photos we've seen from a compact camera.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,848x2,136 resolution, 3x zoom lens (36-108mm), 16MB xD memory. **Part code** N076590A



HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

CANON PowerShot A510

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £136 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.empiredirect.co.ukDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

Canon has crammed a lot of controls into the A510, but it's still easy to use. It's comfortable to hold and uses standard AA batteries. The 3.2-megapixel camera has a 4x optical zoom and produces clear and vivid photos in automatic mode. Slip it into manual mode, though, and you can set the aperture and shutter speed, which is unusual for such an inexpensive camera.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,048x1,536 resolution, 4x optical zoom, 16MB SD memory. **Part code** 9717A007AA





REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

ACER
CS-6530

RATING ★★

PRICE £150 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.comDETAILS www.acer.co.uk

Acer's smart 6-megapixel CS-6530 digital camera marks a departure from the company's usual design and is actually quite stylish. The slim metal shell feels solid and well made, and it doesn't look out of place beside pricier cameras from more established manufacturers. Its 3x zoom lens is bright and its controls are responsive.

The CS-6530 is a pleasure to use. A bright 2.5" screen occupies most of the rear face, but buttons are well placed and reassuringly firm. A slider switches between still, movie and playback modes, so it's easy to keep track of which mode you're in. Flash, macro, timer and exposure compensation settings can be accessed quickly and efficiently, and have all the variations you need for everyday use. All the camera's options are easy to access, thanks to a clean and well-designed menu system.

However, things turn a little sour once you transfer the photos to your computer. Well-lit shots have warm, pleasing colours, but while the maximum resolution of 2,816x2,112 should allow for prints up to 9x6", we noticed a general softening

of fine detail. This is more noticeable in landscapes than close-up shots or portraits, but all our test photos showed less detail than we'd expect from a 6-megapixel camera.

Results from low light and flash photography are mixed. Colours are generally warm and inviting and the white balanced expertly judged, but once the ISO slips to 200, noise becomes a big problem.

Acer's stylish and well-specified camera seems a bargain. Sadly, the 3x zoom lens and 6-megapixel sensor don't produce such impressive results. We'd prefer a camera that looked worse and had fewer megapixels, but took better photos.

David McKinnon

✓ Bright screen; looks and feels more expensive than it is

✗ Struggles to resolve fine detail; noisy low-light photos

SPECIFICATIONS 2,816x2,112 maximum resolution, 3x zoom lens (32-96mm), 64MB SD card. **Part code** AM.65303.011

REVIEW 35MM FILM SCANNER

PLUSTEK
OpticFilm 7200i

RATING ★★

PRICE £300 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.datamind.co.ukDETAILS www.plustek.com

Not all flatbed scanners have the necessary backlight for capturing transparencies, but those that do start at around £60. These do a decent job if you're just archiving old holiday snaps, but if you're more serious about film photography you need something a little more specialised.

Plustek's OpticFilm 7200i is a dedicated film scanner that captures 35mm film strips and mounted slides. Its specifications sound promising enough: it can scan and output images in 48-bit colour, and its optical resolution of 7,200 dots per inch (dpi) is higher than that of many professional film scanners.

At this resolution, a 35mm negative yields a 70-megapixel image, so any hairs or dust on the original film will look massive on the capture. The OpticFilm comes with SilverFast iSRD software, which uses a combination of infrared scanning and software processing to detect and remove defects.

Film loaders are supplied for negative strips and mounted slides, although neither is marked with the correct film orientation, which seems an oversight. Once loaded, each holder slots manually into the scanner. At 16 seconds, previews were reasonably quick. Scans were also fast: a single

negative took 48 seconds to capture at 2,400dpi and less than two minutes at 7,200dpi.

Scan quality wasn't as impressive as we'd hoped. High-resolution captures weren't very sharp. We detected blocky artefacts on 7,200dpi images. Detail was lost from the darkest and lightest regions of test images. Scans took twice as long when we used iSRD dust removal, though dust was reduced well with little loss of scan quality. For the best results, you'd need a can of compressed air.

Despite its impressive specifications, the OpticFilm doesn't deliver great images. We recommend you spend more on Epson's F-3200 film scanner, or less on a quality flatbed.

Simon Handby

✓ Decent dust removal

✗ Expensive; scans seem no better than those from a quality flatbed

SPECIFICATIONS 7,200x7,200dpi optical resolution, 48-bit colour depth, USB Hi-speed interface

CHOOSING A...

FLATBED
SCANNER

If you're thinking of buying a flatbed scanner but wonder what features you need, look no further than our expert guide

1 A basic flatbed scanner (see specs in grey below) can produce surprisingly good scans if the mechanics and optics are up to scratch – something you can't tell without performing a test scan. The colour depth is often quoted, but this gives you no idea how faithful those colours will be, and poor focus can make a high optical resolution irrelevant. Disregard interpolated resolutions: they just blow up the scanned picture without adding any extra detail.

2 If you have a high workload, it's worth paying more for a faster scanner. The best can produce an A4 300dpi scan in 15 seconds and a preview scan – used to select a detail to scan – in around five seconds. If you have to scan a stack of paper, buy a scanner with an automatic document feeder (ADF).

3 A 300dpi scan is sharp to the human eye, but if you print it at twice the original size the final resolution is a grainy 150dpi. If you plan to print extreme enlargements you need a 1,200x2,400dpi, 2,400x2,400dpi or 2,400x4,800dpi flatbed. The mechanism and optics quality should also be increased accordingly.

4 Transparencies, such as slides and negatives, must be backlit to be scanned – look for a transparency adaptor. A 35mm film needs to be scanned at very high resolution to produce a decent-sized image. It is better to use a dedicated film scanner for such small items as they can cope with dust and scratches automatically.

5 Beyond the standard TWAIN driver that provides compatibility with any scanner-aware software, decent image-editing and OCR software is useful.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

SCANNING AREA: A4
OPTICAL RESOLUTION: 600x1,200dpi
INTERFACE: USB Hi-Speed
SOFTWARE: TWAIN driver